

MINUTES
New Castle City Planning Commission
Parking Study Sub-Committee Meeting
March 20, 2014 – 4 p.m.
City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: Dr. Joanne Viola, Chair
Jonathan Justice
Chris Robinson
Gail Seitz
Jim Vincent
Tom Whitehead
Albert Vannucci

Members Absent: Lt. Adam Brams
Andrew Hayes
Heather Dunigan, WILMAPCO

Also Present: Russell Smith, Superintendent, National Park Service

*left meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Dr. Viola called the meeting to order. Mr. Chris Robinson, Chief of Good Will Fire Co., was welcomed to the group.

Minutes – Changes were noted. **A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 2/20/14 meeting as amended. Motion approved.**

Communications

- Heather Dunigan informed via letter that the WILMAPCO council has approved staff assistance to complete a sidewalk inventory of New Castle to help identify gaps in needed improvements between parking and designation.
- Superintendent Smith reviewed his letter concerning the National Monument's response about transportation issues and reviews. The park service wants to implement a parking study previously done in the City. There is no need for a new parking plan. An addendum accompanied the letter outlining what was in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, i.e., goal to formalize and optimize existing parking. The committee has addressed some of the issues in the addendum. Discussion followed.

The committee reviewed options suggested in the addendum about doing a parking study in the City.

- Conduct annual parking counts within one block area of court house in 2014 (during peak court house times).
- Create a baseline for parking conditions and monitor yearly. The challenge is to mobilize enough volunteers to do the study. Could possibly utilize volunteer ambassadors for the park service with this task. Conduct parking survey late spring/early summer.
- Ferry cut-off parking is being considered. Councilman Vannucci is working with another councilman to get the lot ready for use. The lot has been recommended by the Planning Commission to City Council.

- Demonstration project for parking permits – *to be discussed later in meeting.*
- Welcoming pedestrians and bicyclists – already being worked on with FLAP grant, Bike Delaware, and way finding for visitors.
- Link the efforts of the new Comprehensive Plan to parking – Planning Commission's responsibility.

Ms. Seitz questioned if all FLAP grants call for "shovel ready" projects and what signage is needed on the path from Third Street parking lots to direct people. Superintendent Smith suggested the committee speak with the State to learn what requirements need to be met for FLAP grants. They are usually two-year grants.

Ms. Seitz spoke about safety issues on Market Street and Third Street involving confusing signage, blockage of street by parked vehicles (on Harmony Street end) making it difficult for emergency vehicle access, and lack of off-street parking for two churches (Emmanuel and Presbyterian) in the area. Better signage, granite curbing, and restricting the number of parking along Market Street will be recommended. Alternative parking areas for the churches should be provided. Drop-off protocol for large church-related events will be determined. School buses should be added to the proposal.

It is unclear whether a resolution or ordinance will be needed for the changes being considered. Dr. Viola will seek endorsement from the Planning Commission at their next meeting.

A motion to adopt the draft proposal was made by Mr. Vincent. Mr. Justice seconded. Motion carried.

Messrs. Vincent and Whitehead presented their goals to improve parking in a way that would complement the National Monument with the least impact on City residents.

From Third Street to the pier along Delaware Street – There are 75 parking spaces, 5 handicapped spaces, 2 special spaces (City-related) and special use behind M&T Bank (private). One loading area space at Second and Delaware Street. Undocumented spaces include in front of town hall, Terry House, corner of Market and Delaware Streets, and at the corner of the former David Finney Inn. They identified open space they felt was the least undesirable. Attributes and details noted for each. Those areas included:

- South of M&T rear parking
- Property east of tennis courts
- Sailing Club area

Remote ground with low impact:

- Old recycle site
- Fort Casimir site
- Bull Hill board yard

They suggest submitting the proposal to the Planning Commission for review and forwarding to the City Council. Need to determine if the Trustees of the New Castle Common (Trustees) and the City would give up property for parking. Need to learn minimum federal National Monument requirements for access, egress and handicapped parking. Involve the police department to identify problem areas by looking at one year of parking violations. Estimate of resource needs to enforce limited parking proposals: minimum light and surveillance requirements and landscaping that would not interfere with surveillance. City Administration would need to provide an evergreen grid of street surface signage for maintenance ease, document maintenance schedule for painting, and estimate of maintenance resources to maintain additional parking lots.

Discussion of the proposals for expansion of existing parking followed. Mr. Whitehead provided more details about parking spaces behind the bank, tennis courts, and Sailing Club. He said that Drew Hayes, P.E., has voiced support for additional parking behind M&T Bank. Dr. Viola said she has alerted the President of the Trustees that some of their properties, including this area, would be discussed at this meeting. *(Drawings were submitted by Mr. Whitehead and provided to committee members.)*

Mr. Whitehead stressed that title searches need to be done to determine who owns the land identified as open space. There was discussion about parking and time-limited parking that would be designated as resident and business mixed use.

Councilman Vannucci will encourage City Administrator Barthel to speak with the Trustees and private land owners about the committee's proposal to expand parking.

Mr. Whitehead said the striping for parking spots should be 20 feet versus the current 17 feet, meaning for every 5 parking spots one spot is lost. He would like the City to look into this matter, particularly with the busier streets, including Delaware Street.

The committee was in agreement that this proposal will be presented to the Planning Commission at their April meeting.

Chief Robinson requested making Third Street from the Progressive Club to South Street (going south) designated one way and turn left on the gravel road (make asphalt) designated one way (going north). He described numerous 'near misses' with two-way traffic and pedestrian traffic in the area. More enforcement is needed at the tennis courts, curbs need to be painted brighter on both sides of the street identifying parking spots. Violation of parking creates problems for emergency vehicles. Mr. Justice said the request for a one-way street should be directed to City Council.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer

(Stenographer not present at meeting; minutes prepared from recording.)